

## Dinner

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# Dinner

by [Melzious](#)

## Summary

Food brings people together, provides warmth, nurtures. And sometimes its just what you need to remember the warmth and strength in bonds. Even if something is missing-it's never really lost.

## Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

The wind nipped at her face as she tucked a strand of her pink hair behind her hair.

She was cold. Oh, so very cold.

Still, she had developed a numbness to it. Today, however, that did not seem to shield her. It usually left only a slight tingle typically. Well, that and the ever prevailing feeling of emptiness. Was this how it felt when you lost something that you cared for with every inch of your being, that you loved? Or was this how it felt when you failed. When everything slipped out of your grasp with casual ease. Whatever it was, it hurt-stung like hell. Well, she supposed, it hurt the first week, but everything seemed so surreal, so fuzzy. Perhaps, it was her mind blocking the memory in all its clarity, all its intensity.

She hugged her arms closer, the hair standing up on them as she shivered. She endured this. Ever. Single. Night. And in the night she waited for her teammate to return to the home he would most likely never set eyes on again. Did he ever look back as her vision went black? With cold surrounding her, caressing her, she was almost certain it was not so. She lost hope around day three. Yet, here she remained. Waiting. Because sometimes, the only thing that can pause your sadness, your sorrow if even for a moment, is routine. A routine that is mechanical and rigid, commanding your body.

“Sakura-”

A voice snapped her out of her trance, a breath of wind disrupting leaves. She blinked quickly, though there was really no point in trying to flutter out the tears. Her eyes were just as red and puffy as they had been since he left. It was funny; funny to think of how she would have cared how she looked. She almost scoffed when she thought about it. Her past self seemed so trivial just like the past and the memories Team 7 made must have felt to *him* as he turned his heel on his home for over a decade.

She didn't have to turn away to know who the voice belonged to. Her fists clenched, numb and tight. She spoke no words as she turned her head slowly, whether in shame or disappointment she did not know. Her hair gated off the view of her face, but she could still confirm that the speaker was indeed the whiskered blonde. “Sakura, you should go home or there's no point in waiting here-”

“No point in what? Waiting for him-” she hadn’t said his name since Naruto came back from the retrieval mission. Saying Sasuke’s name was acknowledging her was gone, far, far away. “-to come home? Well if you’re to take me home, I don’t wanna go! Home doesn’t feel right when-”

Naruto offered a small smile, a sad one. He spoke gently, “Sasuke isn’t here. Trust me, how home doesn’t feel like home all that well.”

Sakura, remembering how Naruto lacked friendly contact with people for most of his life, blushed in shame. “I didn’t mean-”

“It’s okay! I’ve learned to live with it, so you can too!” He meant this to be reassuring, rather than a tough-live sort of way. Sakura understood this, she knew that despite all of the boy’s brashness and lack of common sense, he was intuitive to the emotions of others. “You know, I’ve gotten by with makeshift.”

“Makeshift?”

“Yeah! We can have a makeshift home until Team 7 is back together again!:

Sakura giggled into her hand. “You want us to make a tree fort?”

Naruto shook his head, although a smile tugged strongly on his lips. “We can make a makeshift home! Ya know, like the feeling of home.” Sakura nodded. “And the best way to do that is food! Food is the best way to strengthen bonds!”

“Oh! So you want to make a home-cooked meal?”

“Erm, defined home-cooked.”

“You want us to eat cooked ramen?” Sakura deadpanned.

“Y-yeah, but it’s the thought that counts, right? And I have some great ramen!”

Sakura pursed her lips. “Not spicy?”

“Not spicy,” the straw-haired boy reassured.

“Hmmm, okay!”

As the pair of genin turned away from the village gates and walked towards Naruto’s apartment, they were watched by a pair of eyes in the distance, a pair belonging to someone who overheard the whole conversation. Disappearing along an opposite path from the two, the figure moved with light steps towards the only store that was open at this time of night. Hands never fingering the small book that was in his pouch during Sakura and Naruto’s conversation. This occasion, he felt, required his whole attention and dedication

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Sakura hummed as she filled the pot with water from the faucet. Bobbing her head, she moved to the stove and slid the pot on somewhat clumsy due to the lack of practice with the weight of the pot filled with water. A few droplets fell, sizzling on the burner. They had decided against making ramen in the microwave, choosing to use packaged ramen instead since they figured it might taste a little better. Not that it would make that much of a difference. Sakura, as well, had decided to make the ramen herself, squinting meticulously at the faded instructions on the bag. She wanted them both to have a change of pace, she explained. Sakura was used to her parents cooking and Naruto was used to cooking for himself.

Stomach grumbling, Naruto kicked his feet under the table, anxiously awaiting the smell of ramen to fill the air. Sakura spun around and clasped her hands together. “Now we just have to wait for it to boil! It should only be a few minutes, right?”

Naruto started to nod, though mid nod, he was interrupted by a knock at the door. The two shared a look of confusion before anxiety started to chip away at Naruto’s expression. As he

pushed his chair out, using the table to stabilize his weight, he grimaced while muttering, “Please don’t be the landlord. Please don’t be the landlord. Please don’t be the landlord.”

He held his breath, hands clammy around the knob. Pulling it open, he winced in preparation. The door squeaked, as it was cheap and in desperate need of new hinges. A gust of cold air rippled into the apartment, the cozy feeling starting to dissipate until the identity of the stranger was revealed. The light reflected off the headband belonging to the ninja called Kakashi Hatake. Naruto let out a breath of relief, not entirely surprised their teacher was here. After all, he had done much odder things. “Room for one more?”

Naruto moved aside to accommodate Kakashi and the bags that he was carrying. Closing the door and cutting off the room’s intake of crisp, bitter air, Naruto turned to Kakashi, beginning his barrage of questions, “Why are you out so late? What’s in the bag? How did you know we were here? Were you stalking us, Kakashi Sensei?”

Kakashi rapidly fired back his own answers as if he expected the questions word to word. “Jonin don’t have curfews. Ingredients. I overheard you talking. It’s a teacher’s duty to stalk his students so stop looking at me like that.”

Sakura bounced over and pulled the corner of one bag down. Clapping her hands together, she exclaimed, “Oh, is this dumpling stuff? That’s my favorite?”

No mention was made of how Kakashi knew this fact from careful listening during the Team’s dates at Ichiraku’s. Kakashi only nodded, a Sakura swore he had a grin plastered on his face under that mask. Sakura promised, “We can have ramen another time, sometime soon! But we don’t want the dumpling ingredients to go bad.”

“Honestly, that ramen could last under another Great Ninja War.”

The laughter of three rang through all of their ears, a comfort greater than any words could provide. Kakashi clasped his hands around both his students’ shoulders. It was firm but gentle. “Let’s get cookin’ you two! Sakura can lead the mission!”

“Cha! I’ll make the best dumplings.”

The words, “Sasuke doesn’t know what he’s missing” hung in the air, but only for a moment. Sakura was now certain of one thing. This feeling, the feeling of being together with a family forged through bonds and friendship, was not foreign. No, on their missions and their day’s off, the team spent most of their time together. Those memories felt warm. Warm to Sakura. Warm to Kakashi, And warm to Naruto. And Sakura was sure that Sasuke remembered that warmth. That he had felt it, too.

That he did look back.

It wasn’t cold, not the least bit at all, even though Naruto lacked proper heating in his apartments. Something was keeping them warm. And that same something must have been keeping Sasuke warm.

## End Notes

Team Seven is so cute. My heart gets obliterated every time they're together.

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